



GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

March 25, 2009

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation,

In this time of economic distress, when more than one in 10 Californians are out of work and the repercussions are felt throughout our great state, we must do all we can to boost trade with our international partners – not stifle it. And yet I am afraid that the prohibition recently placed on Mexican truckers will do exactly that, with the result being markets functionally closed to our goods and thousands more Californians unemployed at a time when we can quite literally least afford it.

Drought and the broader national economic crisis have already punished the agricultural community of California severely. Now this community faces even more job losses and economic devastation because the United States has acted voluntarily to violate its commitments under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Uncertainty has also dropped upon workers in other sectors of our economy due to Mexico's retaliatory sanctions.

As you are well aware, Mexico is California's largest trading partner. With our increasingly connected world economy, it's critical that we work with Mexico to build the partnerships that will drive economic development and job growth in the years ahead. I understand the concerns surrounding long-haul trucking from Mexico, and that is why my administration has been very closely monitoring the Cross-Border Truck Safety Inspection Program. As I told Transportation Secretary LaHood two weeks ago, ensuring the safe conditions and operations of all vehicles on our nation's roadways must be our highest priority.

But we must not allow safety to serve as a smokescreen for protectionist measures that cause more economic harm at a time when this country already has serious challenges to overcome. I am encouraged that Members of Congress met with Secretary LaHood today to discuss how the United States will honor its treaty commitments with Mexico. The termination of the pilot program has not made U.S. roads safer, but it has hurt the economy of California and the nation as a whole.

Beyond my concerns related to this particular episode, I am troubled by the disturbing signals it sends to our most valued trading partners. In times of economic distress, the one sure way to worsen the plight of American workers is to retreat behind arbitrary and disingenuous protectionist walls. Now is precisely the time for Congress to further open markets to American products rather than raising additional barriers to trade.

Members of the California Congressional Delegation
March 25, 2009
Page two

I believe the White House is committed to a new long-haul trucking program. But it cannot happen without action from Congress, and I am writing to ask that California's representatives immediately take the lead in restoring a program to allow Mexican trucks to safely operate within the United States and allow Mexico to remove the retaliatory tariffs it has put in place. The people of California – tens of thousands of whom find employment producing everything from grapes to almonds to Christmas trees – depend upon it. My administration stands ready to assist in any way possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arnold Schwarzenegger", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Arnold Schwarzenegger

/la